

# What Artistic, Pedagogic and Therapeutic Challenges can Arise with a Community Based Theatre Project?

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on and discusses the strategies to solve different Artistic, Pedagogic and Therapeutic challenges in a staged musical based on local life, language and history with a diversity of people in a small town in Norway.

Using a graphic model comprised of three intersecting circles, where each circle represents the Artistic, Pedagogic or Therapeutic challenge, I analyze both the overlapping and the distinct areas where these challenges occur. This analysis covers the process from the project's inception through to the final performance.

**Keywords:** Artistic, pedagogic, special needs, therapeutic, Community Based Theatre

## Introduction

The starting point of this research is the desire to create a Community Based Theatre performance based on local history during the period of 1950-60 – with accounts of lived life experience in a small community, in Mosjøen, Norway. The idea is to make the inhabitants conscious about why the town is a town today and what the town and the region were like before the influence of the establishment of a big aluminum factory. It tells the impact of industrialization on people in general and on the new working class in particular during this period.

Theatre that grows out of community process and issues has the same goals as any other theatre, with other goals attached. There is a desire that voices will be heard that are most often not heard in the mainstream theatre; that issues will be discussed that are very seldom discussed. (Diamond, 2007, p.58)

From the very beginning the research focuses on the artistic development by telling a part of the local and regional history through music, songs, dance and acting. This is a fairly general starting point opening to many possibilities.

Artistic Development is only one of the three priorities in the research; pedagogic and therapeutic focuses provide questions and challenges in equal proportions. The focuses altered as the production progressed; the participants faced unexpected issues from the start and up until the final performance.

Some questions arise:

- Does artistic, pedagogic and therapeutic challenge have something in common?
- When and why do two of the challenges above have something in common? When and why is it purely an artistic, a pedagogic or a therapeutic challenge?

Niels Damkjær (1999) considered this theme in an article “MIMESIS” which stated “I dramaets spændingsfelt mellem kunst, pædagogik og terapi’ [The tension between art, pedagogic and therapy]” (p.199). He also described it as “independent of which one

is chosen in the first place of art, pedagogic or therapy – the other two numbers follows more or less and can sometimes move all attention from the main focus”. (Damkjær, 1999, p. 201) From the above, a natural headline emerged for this article.

I will discuss different parts below with some examples from the process.

## **Definition of “Community Theatre”**

The etymological roots of the term “community theatre” go back to 1920, when Cornell University Professor Alexander Drummond employed the expression in upstate New York to refer to his stimulation program for developing “fine original plays authored by the people of the area”. Another concept is “community based” or grassroots theatre (Van Erven, 2001, p.1). Van Erven presented and discussed examples from six parts of the world, showing how the label “community theatre” means something different in North America than it does in Europe, Asia or Africa. In North America, the term means the same as “amateur theatre” and in Europe, it is mainly a “middle-class” theatre activity, whilst the “working class” is a part of community theatre.

Different community (based) theatre projects have their own distinct, individual stories, but they also have qualities in common:

- The emphasis is on local and/or personal stories rather than pre-written scripts. (Van Erven, 2001, p.2)
- Community theatre also expresses the benefits of artistic pleasure and socio-cultural empowerment of its community participants. Its materials and aesthetic forms always emerge directly from the community whose interest it tries to express. (Van Erven, 2001, p.3)
- Every community theatre production is unique, told in its owner’s words and expression, and with its own atmosphere.

Community based theatre has a long tradition in Scandinavia. One of the first performances took place in Tärpes in Finland in the late 1960s, under the guidance of director Ralf Långbacka. In Scandinavia it has been labeled “local theatre performances” /”Lokalspill”/grassroots theatre or “dig where you are”. These performances have often been based on local history and issues, with varying content and focus but they do all

have a common thread of authenticity and conflict between those who have power and those who have not. People from a wide range of professions, educational backgrounds and avenues of employment are involved. It is never a question of which social/economic class the participants belong to. The only criterion is their adaption to make meaningful theatre together with others.

In this context artistic challenges include all the initial conceptual work of creating a clear structure for the script. The artistic work demands creativity and stage solutions that will clarify further work. Art is linked to creativity and quality of set, costumes, light etc. The content of the artistic concept emerges from the creative and production processes between all participants involved, both professional and non professional. As in all stories, the artistic expression is at the core of the dialogues with its audience.

The pedagogic concept is the notion of art as conscious life experience. It is about cultural identity both for the participants and its audiences. In all theatre productions, there are pedagogic considerations, particularly when one is directing an ensemble. There are also many teaching and learning concepts within the dialogues and between participant interactions, including the production team. A good pedagogic process will bring the collective group together to a level of empowerment, even if there may be some painful moments during the process.

The British Association of Drama therapists presents drama therapy this way:

Drama Therapy has its main focus the intentional use of healing aspects of drama and theatre as the therapeutic process. It is a method of working and playing that uses action methods to facilitate creativity, imagination, learning, insight and growth.

(The British Association of Drama therapists, 2011)

Therapy in this context is not a fixed term, but must be seen as a wider concept with various expressions. The therapeutic part of the theatre process in our case has to be understood in a more flexible, open way. However, emphasis should also be made that it is not therapy! According to Diamond (2007) “like any good theatre, it can and often has therapeutic value.” (p. 58). Processes in Community theatre appeal to the participants

in ways which make the story and roles closer to their private lives than other kinds of theatre. Rohd (1998) mentioned “There is no doubt that intense feelings and responses will sometimes arise as you do this work with youths and adults” (p. 71). This is a generic definition and, in our case, we did have participants with special needs as well.

## **Method**

This research and viewpoints come from a combination of qualitative research approaches studying characteristic of artistic, pedagogic and therapeutic practice in Community Based Theatre. My role is a participatory observer, as I led the artistic process and was a director of the play. The play is based on interviews recorded and collected from the local museum in the beginning of 1990, and I transcribed them. Through practical actor training and workshops and through dialogues and discussions, my personal knowledge grew as I implemented the production. To document the project, I kept many notes from the rehearsals. Photos taken by a local photographer presented the final performance. Three of the performances were also recorded in video.

## **A Brief History of Mosjøen Byspill, Its Aim, Organization and Activity**

Mosjøen Byspill was organized and established in 1991, with the goal of producing original plays based on the history of the town and its inhabitants. An executive committee oversees both financial and strategic matters. The following questions indicate our theatre philosophy: What is the past of the town? What is the present? How might the town develop and look into the future? What are the identities of the town and its inhabitants? How do we create and use the environment as part of the theatre? Mosjøen Byspill seeks to involve all kinds of people in its productions. This is a true Community Based Theatre organization, one among many others in the world.

## **The Feature of the Progress of “Til Verket/To the Works”**

First, let me explain the title of the play. “Til Verket” is given “To the Works” in English. In Norwegian the title has multiple meanings. There is the lighter meaning of “going to work at the factory” as well as a deeper meaning “to solve a huge issue by

enthusiasm, energy, go-ahead spirit and wisdom”. This last concept was the lifeblood of this project, resulting in positive and transformational experiences for the participants, the audiences and the contributors on every level. The illustration below explains the production progress of the project.

2003-2008	CHRONOLOGICAL TIMELINE OF EVENTS
<b>2003</b>	Presentation of the ideas by a group of participants who had contributed in a previous performance of Community Based Theatre. The ideas are more or less dismissed.
<b>2004</b>	The executive committee decides to go ahead with the ideas. A previous play is re-staged. Some people write readers' letters against the concept of a new play.
<b>2005</b>	The curator of the museum provides important information about interviews and written sources.
<b>2006</b>	I start to write the recorded interviews of 15 former workers and collect information for the playwright. The executive committee makes several applications for sponsors and public contributors. Playwrights are contacted about the issues, the focus, the materials and the schedule. One playwright accepts. First meeting between director and playwright.
<b>2007</b>	The contract between Executive Committee/ playwright is signed: a) December 1: A first rough draft of the play b) March 1: The final play The council, playwright, composer, choreograph and director visit the factory for a tour. The first artistic meeting among the playwright, composer, choreograph, director on discussion about roles, use of music and dance in the performance. Exchanging ideas. Playwright and director read rough draft of Act 1. (December) Discuss what is clear and what is not. Discuss what the second part has to be. Playwright receives a deadline – January 2008 for the first draft of Act 2. Meeting between composer, choreograph and director, reading act 1

2008	<p>Director awaits the playwright – the first dead-lines fail to be met.</p> <p><b>April:</b> the first draft of Act 2 is ready.</p> <p><b>May:</b> The composer and director go through, count 30 songs.</p> <p>Feedback to the playwright whom was asked to write more situations, use fewer songs and clarify the roles. The timeline for the composer is shrinking.</p> <p><b>June:</b> Recruiting participants.</p> <p>Twice a week: Workshops/building ensemble</p> <p>Three months after D-line for the final script - the playwright has ignored our feedback.</p> <p>Composer and director reduce the lyrics.</p> <p>The composer's work begins.</p> <p><b>July:</b> The first read of Act 1</p> <p>Production Manager becomes a part of the team.</p> <p><b>August:</b> Production Manager and director do the casting and continue recruiting actors and dancers.</p> <p>The ensemble read the play for the first time.</p> <p>Music for piano is ready. Rehearsals are held every day.</p> <p>Dancers start to work with the choreographer.</p> <p>Director and Production Manager lead the production.</p> <p>The date of the first performance is changed from September 12 to October 8</p> <p><b>September-October:</b> Rehearsals are held every day until October 8.</p>
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To find the playwright, we contacted three individuals and ended up with an experienced person— Edvard Rønning. He received a full professional fee and a professional contract outlining the progress and dates of delivery as above.

Both the composer and choreographer, Raymond Enoksen and Solvor P. Landvik are young, recently educated artists, raised in Mosjøen with desire to contribute on a professional artistic level to the community.

The script was delivered three months behind the schedule. This meant that we had to delay recruiting the participants from March to June. I began work-shopping without any scripts. The delay resulted in several extra costs and challenges for all of us. Resolving script problems and developing a concept were the first artistic challenges for the composer and director. We had imagined a strong and creative process with the playwright after March 1, but time did not allow to make it possible.

At the beginning of August the casting process began in collaboration with the Production Manager Ann Elise Albertsen. The ensemble began to read the script. By mid August the music was composed and we started to learn the music in collaboration with a

piano player and vocal director.

At the beginning of October we had seven rehearsals together with twenty musicians in the orchestra prior the first performance. We staged four performances for 1500 people with outstanding effort from forty people on stage, twenty musicians and a few people in the staff.

## **An Arctic Town in the Shadow of the Second World War**

“Til Verket”/ “To the Works” is a musical version— the story of this town before the factory was built and the subsequent influence on people in Mosjøen and Helgeland in the years between 1950 and 60 after the factory arrived. Post World War Two, the northern part of Norway experienced poverty. People struggled to feed themselves because income was very low, and there was shortage of all kinds of goods. There were only part time jobs and there was widespread economic insecurity in the area. At this time Mosjøen was a little town with a few hundred inhabitants in a two thousand and five hundred square metres area. But Mosjøen had long traditions, going back to 1875, based on trade and handcrafts. The story of the play is telling about meetings and negotiations between politicians from Mosjøen and members of the Storting (our Parliament). There were several negotiations between the Manager of the company from Switzerland, Mr. Schnorff, Mr. Aas the Norwegian Manager and principle politicians. With a huge hydro-electric power production already established in the area, the main issue in these negotiations revolved around how cheaply electrical power could be delivered if Mosjøen could provide a site for a factory. There is a parallel story about two young people from the island Herøy. He went to America for work with a plan to save money for a ticket for his girlfriend as well. As time went by, she moved to Mosjøen and began working as a weaver in a factory. A few years after he returned, they were still in love. He began to work in the aluminum factory. They got married and had a baby. His co-workers helped him to build a house. The couple participated in the community as residents and they formed a network with friends and colleagues.

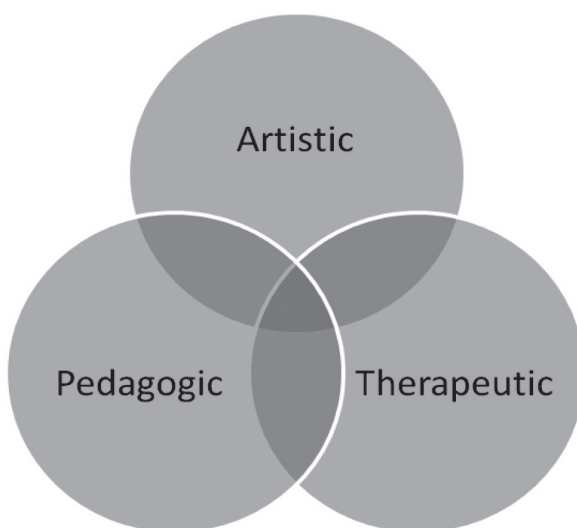
The musical is about the life of ordinary people –their dreams for a better future, education, love, friendships and interactions, workers struggle for rights, solidarity, class distinction, gender roles and pollution. The play provides and reminds the participants



and the audiences of the huge evolution in all aspects of Norwegian society during the last 50 years.

## **A Model of the Artistic, Pedagogic and Therapeutic Challenges in This Context**

As I mentioned above, the pedagogic and therapeutic concepts evolve as equally important factors as the artistic challenge. The model below represents the production. Some situations could be easily categorized; others overlap in category. I will exemplify by using some narratives from the production.



At the core of this model all three circles have one point in common – the performance and its audience. According to Diamond (2007), “Interactions among the actors and between the actors and the audience is the core of the theatrical experiment” (p.83). It is here that the core crises were solved and a solid trust between people visibly emerged.

### **Artistic Challenges**

Diamond (2007) discussed his view on art:

Art is process, not product, although I will suggest that art often is regarded as product because it suits our consumer society [...] Art can be the result of an individual or group in a room, creating. (p.72)

The production schedule above was one of the biggest challenges in the artistic process. All theatre work involves tight schedules, but in this case there was exceptional time pressure. Hannula, Suoranta, and Vadén (2005) stated, “The artistic starting point offers a motor and motive, which both summarizes the totality and separates the details”(p.20). The producer, Ann Elise Albertsen, and I looked at each other in exacerbation on more than one occasion, as we were determined to overcome all obstacles as they arose. Our determination was the energy and force which found solutions to a never-ending string of seemingly impossible problems.

The structure and storytelling of the play was written in an abstract way which was both a benefit and a disadvantage artistically. The benefit was that it made it possible to interpret and focus on those sequences which I considered critically important. The disadvantage was causing initial role confusion in the script. The playwright presented a confusing narrative. On the same page there could be roles for Woman 1, 2 and 3 – then Lady 1, 2 and 3, without any logical connection between them. Similarly, “role names” emerged during subsequent pages with none or very little coherent link with their first appearance.

There was also confusion with the storyline due to the random nature in which lines were written, with text taking a particular meaning and the rapid change into something else (and then back again). Organizing the script into scenes was the first step, then clarifying all the small independent roles and constructing an internal logic between them. Simultaneously, the composer and I frequently had to reduce the text to maintain the proper focus on the storyline. In the end the script was structured into twenty-five scenes with songs. The roles were assigned real names to eliminate confusion because all of the actors had to play multiple roles. The structure of the play involved shifts between ensemble to a small group of people and back to ensemble again. I created a storyboard for the transitions to prevent confusion and to maintain an artistic flow in the show.

The script was in a local Norwegian dialect (the dialect of the playwright), quite

different from the dialect spoken by the people in Mosjøen. This complicated the process for the composer. The lyrics of the songs lacked consistency. Some of the lyrics were beautifully poetic; some of the songs had lyrics which lacked flow. The composer, Raymond Enoksen, the choreographer, Solvor P. Landvik and I, along with the song director and ensemble contributed to lyric adaption and interpretations.

The choreographer and I discussed how to use the dancers. We wanted the choreography to be as supportive as possible, underlining the lyrics for both the dancers and singers. Both the choreographer and I wanted the participants to stretch themselves and reach to a technique level they did not imagine and expect themselves.

Casting for this production was demanding and challenging. There were multiple roles to be assigned, with only a few constant and recurring characters. Finding the right balance of roles for each actor and dancers was challenging. Over the course of the production some people felt overwhelmed. In some cases, issues within their private lives emerged. Some of the participants' were affected by the disapproval by their spouses of their commitment to this project. Some participants quit for a while and returned when their private life crises were resolved. Casting in community theatre will always be fragile as it is difficult for many participants to find balance between their private lives and their commitment to the community theatre project.

We did not have a stage designer - Solvor and I started to experiment with design ideas. The script needed open and creative rooms. A simple solution was found using triangles and stairs as the basis for the stage design.

When the practical work began on stage, I needed to address my first challenge, which was to determine what kind of directing and how much information were going to provide the actors. This is always awkward when directing. Individuals tended to forget a lot of the information and artistic direction they have received from one day to the next. I addressed this by directing through a process of questions and concentrating my focus on collaboration. I built trust and confidence between the conductor and the ensemble by talking with them individually and by remaining by their side when necessary to provide support. This is both artistic and pedagogic territory attuned to every director. It is impossible to direct people in details before they know the lyrics and music. Because

of compressed timeline I used my storyboard to provide a rough guide of the scenes and passage of time.

Another big challenge was having only seven days with twenty musicians. They did not rehearse separately on their own. Common rehearsal time was used to for their orchestra rehearsals which was not the most efficient use of time.

A musical challenge we faced was how to accommodate the different tempos, the scores, the CD for dancers, the piano scores, the CDs for singers and the complete orchestra. All had different tempos. As a result of the hasty speed, we adopted it in order to complete the music. Fortunately the choreographer was a good musician and resolved this issue. She figured out, communicated well and solved the tempo problems by focusing on the needs of the dancers. Her argument was that the singers may sing faster and the orchestra may do the same, but dancers cannot wait in the air to come down.

The final artistic challenge was in costume design. Our dress designer misrepresented her abilities to design and make the costumes in time. This situation became apparent very late in the process and produced many frustrations for the production. It was almost too late for us to solve this problem. The producer ended up taking responsibility for costumes while the choreographer and I had to work late into nights sewing costumes over the final two weeks.

## **Pedagogic Challenges**

The most appropriate time to invite people to join in the production was delayed several times in the hope of receiving a complete script. By the beginning of June, I could wait no longer. I began to conduct workshops twice a week. These were open to everybody. The principle priorities were trust, confidence, images, improvisation, imagination and roles. A core of ten participants showed up for all workshops. The list of interested participants grew considerably by the end of the month.

There was a range of professions and ages represented including factory workers, nurses, teachers, unemployed, cleaners, electricians, drivers, municipal manager, administrative workers and office workers, dentists and retirees. Their education levels

and ages varied from 14 to 72 years. Some were experienced in theatre and became the pillars of the venture whilst others were making their stage debut.

One pedagogic challenge was to generate and maintain interest before the script had been completed. People would ask questions that could not be answered such as what kind of characters would be in the script. All I could say was that we would find something interesting for everybody to do. A first priority was to explore the participants' knowledge about the period from 1950-60 in general as well as in Mosjøen specifically. This inspired many images of different situations from the interviews. For example, there was the story of a strong and bossy foreman who used a whistle and yell at the workers. By exploring and developing these reality based images, we found different scenarios to include in the final play. The situation with the bossy foreman and his whistle was one of the real situations that eventually made it onto the stage in the final production. By including individual participants' experiences, we managed to maintain the interest and focus of the participants as we awaited the script.

In group processes, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The pedagogic challenge was to strengthen the weakest links as much as possible. By getting to know each individual in the ensemble, we shortened the learning curve of the ensemble's strengths and weaknesses, acquiring an overview of each individual's resources, using their qualities and strengths without delay. For example, one participant was a pretty good carpenter. He created a boat for a prop. One of our couples was skilled rock and swing dancers which the performance needed for staging a Saturday night party.

So who is the teacher in a Community theatre project? The answer is that it varies. It is a shared responsibility. The one who perhaps has been the weakest link in one situation may be strongest in another. Learning and teaching in this context concerns not only theatre skills, but also about self-esteem, self-concept and identity - as Hogg and Vaughan (2002) stated, "Social identity is that part of the self-concept that derives from one's membership of social groups" (p.401). A person's identity is mainly linked to aspects and qualities which do not change, as well as their gender, age, family, occupation etc. In any ensemble, the more heterogenic the group is, the more qualities and talents that exist within that group. The pedagogic challenge is to cast as well as possible so that these varied qualities may come through in the performance. Inexperienced people like to

play themselves and may encounter problems if the role requires qualities too far outside of their self identities.

Another challenging situation was the experience of dealing with a woman who brought a closed mind to the workshops. When I tried exercises in improvisation, she felt unfamiliar and estranged from the situation. She was frequently ambivalent, an expression of insecurity. Despite her often negative attitude, the ensemble encouraged her to stay the course, no matter how many times she would announce that she “wanted to quit”. She continued to attend rehearsals and workshops, but did break down claiming “I[*she*] feel[s] nobody likes me, so I[*she*] quit[s]!” This caught everyone by surprise. I asked the group to continue the rehearsal whilst I spoke with her outside. We had a long talk where I told her I expected the same from her as others, no special treatment. I understood that she was here out of her own free will and reminded her that nobody could force her to stay. I expressed my feelings about her overall attitude and that, because this challenging production demanded courage and positive spirit, we did not have time for negative energy. I also explained that she was welcome to leave and return at a later time if she so wished. This would be her decision alone and I did not intend to ask her to leave. I was sure that we had “lost her”, but in the next moment she announced, “I’ll [She’ll] stay!” She embraced and thanked me. What a great surprise! We returned to the rehearsal together. I announced her decision to the ensemble.

She took a seat and observed for a while. Later in the production, when she had difficulty with the colourfulness of her costume (because it made her more visible on stage), she was again close to quitting. She failed to draw a line between her private feelings and her role. At this occasion the members of the group convinced her about the importance of her participation. The result was empowering for her and thus produced a more self-confident woman – one who has continued to participate in theatre.

I had choices in that situation. I could have allowed her to leave in the first place without comment, but I chose to take on the pedagogic challenge. I believe social interaction is central to learning. In this case, as we progressed through the process of evaluating weak and strong links in the ensemble, this woman had demonstrated strong musical skills and she was the one who always remembered her lyrics. She was transformed as a member of the group and she developed a new identity during the

theatre process.

I introduced the triangles and stairs, and asked the ensemble to explore and experiment with the different effects that these simple props could produce. Reactions from the individuals were very different. Some enjoyed the idea at once while others felt anxious. Some even became angry at the exercise. They were asked to create different spaces which appeared in the script, e.g. a speaker's platform, quay, office, mountains, factory ovens, a railway station, a fine restaurant and an assembly hall. During this play and exploratory time, minds were changed as participants began to imagine many different possibilities such an abstract stage design offered.

Theatre can transform members of a group continuously and in different ways during their participation. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, so when we strengthen the weak link, we strengthen the whole.

## **Therapeutic Challenges**

Rohd (1998) quoted Robert Alexander whom said "The act of creating is, in itself, a healthy act, a form of finding one's voice and seeing the world in new ways. In that sense, art is therapeutic. So is the progress" (as cited in Rohd, 1998, p.71).

Nothing is always as it appears. I have two experiences to share.

One of the participants was a young girl with special needs. This girl and her mother had been participants in plays produced of Mosjøen Byspill since 1995. The girl was 5 years old and her mother was one of my students. The social dimension of participation during the term of the rehearsals and performances was incredibly beneficial to both mother and daughter. They continued to take part in community theatre.

At the start of the recruiting process, they were just one mom and a teenage daughter. I involved the mother in the casting and we agreed her daughter that she could be a part of ensemble scenes. We agreed to monitor the situation carefully. In case the girl did not want to participate if things became too demanding for her. But they also wanted to participate in other scenes, a request we honoured. However, for the daughter,

this became too demanding. The girl withdrew at these times, but the mom remained in the scene. They worked together in a few other ensemble scenes, which was absolutely great for both of them. Perhaps this girl's greatest contribution to the group was her spontaneous and immediate positive comments. Once she went up to one of the singers who was struggling with his song and said to him, "I think you are singing beautifully! Look!". She then started to dance around him. She left him speechless and encouraged him to work harder. She had a very positive impact on all of us. As Damkjær (1999) said, "We might receive more or less planned 'gift' or 'profit' of pedagogic and therapeutic sort during a drama – and theatre work or during a performance"(p.203). This girl expressed her positive emotions more than once "from the back row" but she was always present and expressive in the right moment.

During the final two weeks, the ensemble met for one hour of warm-up. So did the drummer. One day I discovered the girl was missing and asked if somebody had seen her. Some in the ensemble pointed to her position next to the drummer. He had given her a tambourine and her assignment was to use it while warming up for dancing. When I asked her if she should join the group she said, "Look at me, Tordis, I love to dance! Look how beautifully I am dancing! I am warming up in my own way!" It was a beautiful situation to see her every day.

The last experience I will share is how crisis can result in empowerment for an entire ensemble. There were two performers in their early twenties who had been assigned recurring characters in the play. They were close friends. The young woman was very quick to learn lyrics while the young man was dyslexic, not unusual in an ensemble like this which is made up of members of the local community. The young woman offered her time to help him out. This worked very well and we managed to avoid problems emerging during the rehearsals.

On the date of dress rehearsal, the young man experienced some psychological difficulties. In the beginning he said it was back problems. I stayed with him and asked if he had ever experienced stage fright. A notion he denied. As time passed, he became more and more problematic. We had to delay the start of the dress rehearsal. After some consideration, the producer eventually took him to the hospital for treatment. This situation produced anxiety and fear amongst the whole company. Should we cancel



it? Damkjær (1999) again reminded us, “An apparent secure pedagogic situation can sometimes provoke a risky therapeutic breakthrough if you are not aware a gradual change of the reason” (p. 202). It was just what happened. He was completely unprepared as his condition came out of the blue. How could I save the dress rehearsal? I asked the female recurring character if someone else could take his part (with a script). She preferred to do both roles and demonstrated character changes by using his hat. She was impressive and great! Fortunately he returned the day after and performed all of the remaining performances.

However, at the end of the first act during the final performance the female recurring character suddenly had a break down. For the producer and me this came as complete surprise. We considered sending her to the hospital, but we also needed some advice on how to resolve Act 2? This performance was the big anniversary event for the factory with more than four hundred people in the audiences. I felt great pressure as I went through the ensemble to find a person capable of jumping into this role at the last minute. I left the dressing room, went outside and approached the woman that I had in mind. I asked her if she would do that part. I told her she was the only one without any roles in Act 2. She said she could use the complete script. What a feeling of catharsis!

I announced the solution to the audience and asked them to show understanding for the replacement, saying she would be using a script. The audience replied with big applause and appreciation.

This second act was odd to see. In the beginning I was aware the tension between the audiences and the ensemble, but from one moment to the next we could all feel how well it worked. Our last minute replacement sang the lyrics as if they were hers. She gained in strength and confidence from the start of the show right through to the final curtain; a standing ovation confirmed her outstanding performance. Another potential crisis transformed itself into an empowering situation for the whole ensemble. This woman has told me she remembered almost nothing from the show. She commented, “it was almost as if I was guided, that it was meant to be like this, especially since I began this journey with such reservation.”

The project was truly embraced by the audiences. Many workers whispered to me,

I felt so moved so I had to cry a little bit.

I felt so proud, proud of living here; to see a show like this, about us, what a big surprise!

Sometimes I forgot I was in Mosjøen, it was so well presented; I thought I was somewhere else even though it was about us!

## **Artistic, Pedagogic and Therapeutic Challenges**

With this type of project, the lines between the artistic, pedagogic and therapeutic situations can be blurred, even if some situations are more firmly in one category than another. Damkjær (1999) stated, “There are three overlapping complexities of problems, content contrasts that we may call complementary” (p. 211).

So what are my questions? When and why did these dimensions have something in common? Is it possible to address and understand the experiences? A Community Based Theatre like this involves two stories, one from the stage and one inside the group. Damkjær (1999) stated,

Inside a concentrated play, theatre mimesis, are the tools artistic expression, the method is a process of learning, the effect is of a healthy nature since the most fundamental learning remains in the cerebral context through intensive and dynamic activity which provides an increasing feeling of wholeness, coherence and perspective! (p.212)

As the stories above indicate, we experienced psychological difficulties which belong in the intersection between the therapeutic and artistic circles. Crisis management and solving problems should be placed in the core because they influence the interaction between actors on stage and the audiences. The impact of the solutions is evident in the success of the production.

In the intersection between therapeutic and pedagogic circles I placed both the story of the girl with special needs and the woman with the closed mind. Each of these performers, in their own way, transformed their role from the therapeutic circle to the pedagogic circle by being supportive, reaching out, teaching others how to sing correctly

and to believe in themselves.

The intersection between the artistic and pedagogic circle included the casting, the exploration of the triangles and stairs as stage props. The casting and its considerations were about how to challenge artistically in order to let each person reach their own individual potential. The exploration of the stage props fell into the same intersection. Through creativity, the participants searched for options that we could use. It might also be placed into the core because some of the participants' anger reactions. But as soon as new images grew out of the abstract forms, the same individuals changed their minds from negativity to enthusiasm.

In the end, this enthusiasm, energy, go-ahead spirit and wisdom became the core of this performance, creating the motivation to look forward and think about what to do next.

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此為上文摘要中譯

# 實行一個社群劇場計劃在藝術層面、教學層面及治療層面上會產生什麼挑戰？

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## 摘要

本文以一個在挪威小鎮的社群劇場音樂劇為案例。這音樂劇是關於小鎮內不同背景及社會階層的人的日常生活、語言及歷史；作者集中討論如何解決在藝術層面、教學層面及治療層面上的挑戰。

本研究利用了一個以三個互相交叉的圈子所組成的繪圖模式為研究工具，而這三個圈子分別代表著藝術層面、教學層面及治療層面上的挑戰。作者更分析了這三個層面在挑戰出現時的相同及獨特的地方。而分析亦涵蓋了本社群劇場音樂劇研究計劃由開始階段至最後演出階段的整個過程。

**關鍵詞：**藝術、教學、特殊需要、治療學、社群劇場

